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Discover Dickson Mound



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**Ten thousand years in
the Illinois River Valley**



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Dickson Mounds, a branch of the Illinois State Museum and a National Historic Site, is one of the few on-site archaeological museums in the Midwest. The purpose of the museum is to discover and preserve the heritage of the prehistoric American Indian. Through ongoing archaeological excavations, study of material remains, publications, exhibits and interpretive programs, the past of the people who once lived along the Illinois River is made meaningful to the people of today.

While the name "Dickson Mounds" is generally used to refer to the entire 162-acre property which includes a number of prehistoric villages and burial mounds, "Dickson Mounds" refers specifically to one mound group of the Late Woodland and Mississippian periods.

Museum hours are 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. daily. The museum is closed on New Year's Day, Easter Sunday, Thanksgiving Day, and Christmas Day. The Gift Shop and Coffee Shop are closed from mid-December through April 1. The museum is in a rural setting with a picnic grounds and trails. The grounds are open until dusk from May 1 to November 1; after this date they close at 5:00 p.m. There is no admission charge.

The rich natural resources of the Illinois River Valley attracted people as early as 10,000 years ago when Ice Age animals lived and were probably hunted in Illinois. Several hunters' spear-points have been found on the bluffs at Dickson Mounds. About 8,000 years ago Indian lifeways changed as the climate grew warmer. Ground stone axes and other tools used for cutting wood, hunting, and processing food have been found at campsites along the river valley. By 2,000 years ago the Indians had developed a special culture centering in villages along the major rivers. This Woodland culture left its mark at Dickson Mounds at a site called Ogden-Fettie, a village with more than thirty associated burial mounds.

Fifty years of archaeology

The study of prehistory at the Dickson Site began over fifty years ago when Dr. Don F. Dickson conducted private excavations on the family farm. This excavation was first opened to the public in 1927 and operated as a private museum until 1945 when Dr. Dickson sold the site to the State of Illinois.

The Dickson excavation attracted the attention of archaeologists from many universities. University of Chicago archaeologists who excavated in Fulton County in the 1930's established many of the methods and field techniques used in modern archaeology. With over 3,000 recorded prehistoric sites, Fulton County is one of the richest archaeological regions in the country.

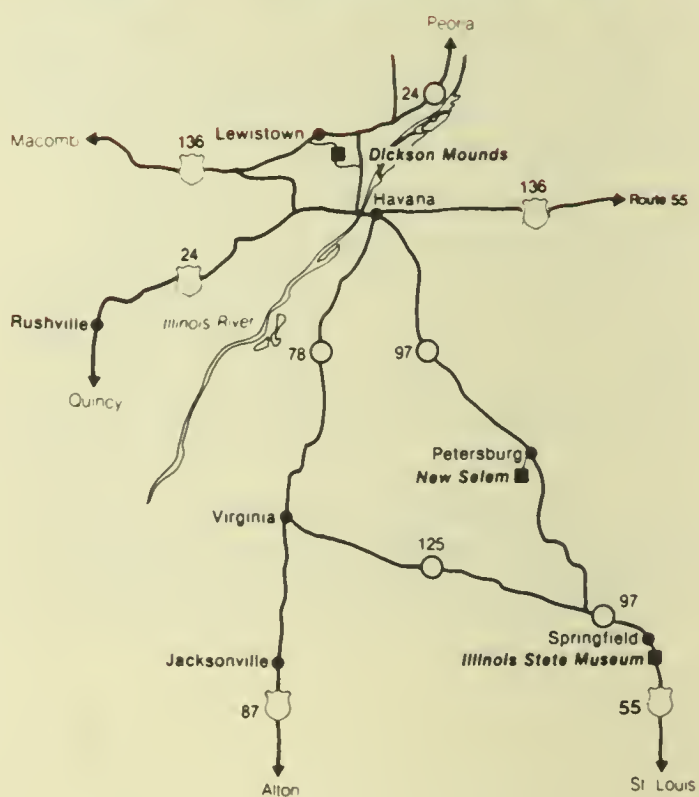
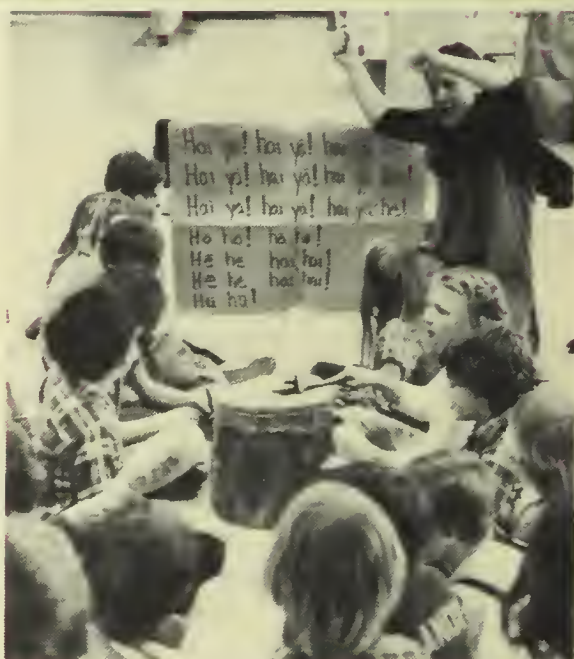
Dickson Mounds Museum serves as a research center for Illinois State Museum archaeologists. Over the last two decades their excavations and studies have greatly increased our knowledge of the prehistoric past.

Between A.D. 900 and 1300, important changes were taking place in lifeways over a large area of North America. These changes can be traced especially well at Dickson Mounds, which stands at the margins of several major culture areas. At the beginning of this time period, people lived in small, scattered settlements and supported themselves primarily by hunting and gathering. By the end of this period, they were concentrated around fortified towns and were part of a highly controlled, structured society which depended partly on farming for its food.

A thousand years ago the inhabitants of a Late Woodland village (Myer-Dickson), on the high ground near the present museum, placed their



burial ground at the edge of the bluff (Dickson Mounds). By about A.D. 1100 people with the lifeways of the strong Mississippian culture (centered downriver at Cahokia near modern St. Louis) established a small settlement (Eveland) in the bottomlands near the Myer-Dickson village. The Woodland and Mississippian populations merged, and by 1250 the Myer-Dickson village had become part of a large Mississippian community of villages, camps, and work stations extending several miles upriver. Its center was a fortified town (Larson) on a hilltop near the present museum. Growth in population and intensive exploitation of resources gradually resulted in a depletion of resources, and by A.D. 1350 the inhabitants had moved away.







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Museum programs for the visitor

The Dickson burial excavation is preserved as an exhibit within the museum building. Other exhibits relate to prehistoric Indians in North America beginning with the earliest evidence of their presence in the Paleo Period and continuing through the successive cultural stages of the Archaic, Woodland, and Mississippian periods. There is also a Special Exhibit gallery and an outdoor observation deck. At the Eveland Village Site — a short walk or drive from the main building — the remains of three of the original structures of this early Mississippian village are preserved for viewing.

The Museum offers several special programs. A series of Sunday afternoon programs is given twice a year. These include slide-lectures, films, demonstrations, nature hikes, and other participatory activities. Guided tours are provided year-round to groups with reservations. Groups may also schedule a Discovery Program in which they participate in activities and crafts such as using stone tools, grinding corn, or making pottery or baskets. Details of these and other special programs will be provided on request.

Getting to Dickson Mounds

Dickson Mounds is located in Fulton County, Illinois, on a bluff along the Illinois and Spoon rivers. It is 60 miles northwest of Springfield and 35 miles southwest of Peoria, off Illinois Routes 97 and 78 between Lewistown and Havana. There is free parking at the museum. Motel accommodations are available in Lewistown and Havana.

Dickson Mounds Museum
Lewistown, IL 61542
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